



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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DARYL L. OSBY
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TO: EACH SUPERVISOR

FROM: DARYL L. OSBY, FIRE CHIEF

DLO

PARTNERSHIP WITH LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT FOR INMATE FIRE CAMP PROGRAM

This memorandum is to inform your Honorable Board that the Los Angeles County Fire Department (Fire Department) is exploring a potential partnership with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's Department) to provide low risk inmates for the Inmate Fire Camp Program.

Since 1981, the Fire Department has partnered with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to provide State inmates for the Inmate Fire Camp Program. The program consists of 24 inmate hand crews operating from five strategically located fire camps throughout the County: Acton, Santa Clarita, San Gabriel Valley, Malibu, and San Fernando Valley. The five inmate fire camps are a cost-effective method of housing and utilizing inmate hand crews to complete conservation projects and assist with wildland fire suppression.

With the adoption of AB 109, the CDCR may no longer be able to provide inmates for the Inmate Fire Camp Program. CDCR is working to revise the camp eligibility classification system, which may allow CDCR to continue providing inmates for the program, but any changes must be approved by the State Legislature and the Governor. Currently, there are no guarantees that these changes will be approved and implemented.

The CDCR has indicated that as a result of AB 109 sentencing changes Statewide, approximately one third of fire camp eligible inmates will now be incarcerated at the local County level. This same review by CDCR also indicated that the County of Los Angeles currently supplies approximately one quarter of all camp eligible inmates throughout the State.

SERVING THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND THE CITIES OF:

AGOURA HILLS
ARTESIA
AZUSA
BALDWIN PARK
BELL
BELL GARDENS
BELLFLOWER
BRADBURY

CALABASAS
CARSON
CERRITOS
CLAREMONT
COMMERCE
COVINA
CUDAHY

DIAMOND BAR
DUARTE
EL MONTE
GARDENA
GLEN DORA
HAWAIIAN GARDENS
HAWTHORNE

HIDDEN HILLS
HUNTINGTON PARK
INDUSTRY
INGLEWOOD
IRVINDALE
LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
LA HABRA

LA MIRADA
LA PUENTE
LAKEWOOD
LANCASTER
LAWNDALE
LOMITA
LYNWOOD

MALIBU
MAYWOOD
NORWALK
PALMDALE
PALOS VERDES ESTATES
PARAMOUNT
PICO RIVERA

POMONA
RANCHO PALOS VERDES
ROLLING HILLS
ROLLING HILLS ESTATES
ROSEMEAD
SAN DIMAS
SANTA CLARITA

SIGNAL HILL
SOUTH EL MONTE
SOUTH GATE
TEMPLE CITY
WALNUT
WEST HOLLYWOOD
WESTLAKE VILLAGE
WHITTIER

In order to accommodate the additional inmate population, the Sheriff's Department requires additional bed space. The Fire Department has 485 available beds for the Inmate Fire Camp Program.

The Fire Department and Sheriff's Department have met on several occasions to discuss the possibility of this partnership. The Sheriff's Department is interested; however, a comparison of this program to other possible solutions needs to be completed.

WILDLAND FIRE MISSION

Fire crews are a necessary component of the Fire Department's wildland firefighting arsenal. It is imperative that the Fire Department retain our own fire crews so we are not required to rely on regional resources when the State is experiencing multiple large wildland fires, as was the case in Orange County during the Santiago Fire in 2007, and in San Diego County during the Cedar Fire in 2003.

The use of inmate hand crews during wildland firefighting is an effective extinguishment and control operation because it allows for a coordinated attack. Fire crews complement both engine company and aircraft resources during perimeter control efforts by completing the extinguishment and overhaul much more quickly. The inmate hand crews also allow engine companies to be deployed for structure defense while the inmate hand crews continue with perimeter control efforts, thus keeping fires from rapidly increasing in size.

FISCAL

The Fire Department is currently working with CDCR to adopt and implement a two-year contract which reimburses the Fire Department \$4.8 million annually to support the inmate fire camp operations.

Since the inception of the Inmate Fire Camp Program with CDCR, the contract has funded up to 82% of the salary and employee benefits costs for fire personnel to staff each of the camps. Even though the percentage has fluctuated over the years, based on the State budget and other factors, this is the lowest funding level ever received by the Fire Department.

The most recent reductions in funding occurred in 2009 when the CDCR indicated they had to reduce the funding by \$3.5 million to the current \$4.8 million. CDCR never received budget authority for the full funding and had been utilizing funding set aside for other programs to make up the difference. Although the Fire Department sought to increase the contract funding during the recent negotiations for a new contract, CDCR indicated that due to the current financial climate at the State level, they could not increase the contract amount. Due to the critical nature of the inmate fire crews, the Fire Department has absorbed the reduction in funding by using District funds to cover the loss.

If the Fire Department were to partner with the Sheriff's Department, a contract would need to be implemented.

Many of the camp facilities are older and located in remote areas, so the Fire Department is challenged with maintaining an acceptable infrastructure, specifically water quality and septic systems that meet State and local regulations. At Camp 14, which is located north of the Santa Clarita area, the Fire Department recently completed a \$3.5 million project to improve water quality and upgrade the septic system. This fiscal year, the Fire Department has budgeted \$3.9 million to make the same improvements at Camp 19 in San Gabriel Canyon above the City of Azusa.

The Fire Department is working to upgrade sleeping areas at Camp 13, Malibu, and the bathroom facilities at Camp 11, Acton, in the coming fiscal years. These improvements could potentially increase the number of beds at each of these facilities.

SUMMARY

The inmate hand crews are of strategic value during wildland firefighting operations. Therefore, the Fire Department believes it is in the County's best interest to support a partnership with the Sheriff's Department.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (323) 881-6180.

DLO:jc

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